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ABSTRACT

Faculty attitudes concerning the Australian government's proposal for periodic reviews of faculty performance were determined through interviews in 1983. The Australian Senate's report on tenure of academic staff recommended that all staff be regularly reviewed on their performance in teaching, research, and service. A sample of 104 University of Queensland faculty were interviewed to elicit their attitudes toward evaluation, staff development, and promotion. The sample ranged in age from 21 to 63: 12 were over 51 years old, while 43 were 35 years or younger. About half were lecturers, a quarter were senior lecturers, and 15 were professors or associate professors. A majority of the sample favored regular reviews, since reviews provide a way to identify and inform staff about their performance, as well as to make them accountable for their professional actions. Respondents also indicated likely positive and negative effects of regular compulsory evaluations on individuals and departments, as well as conditions that favor the acceptance of reviews, such as: clearly stating the purposes of the review and what will be evaluated, identifying the evaluators and how the review will be conducted, and following certain principles in using the results of the reviews. (SW)

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REGULAR REVIEWS OF FACULTY PERFORMANCE

FACULTY VIEWS

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In North America as in Australia faculty evaluation for tenure and promotion is institutionalised. In both most universities and colleges employ their own criteria to judge excellence and have instituted specific processes to arrive at decisions. Looking at it from the other side of the globe one would say that in the States public pressure for accountability and faculty acceptance of accountability has resulted in systems of student and colleague evaluation of teaching, colleague evaluation of research and of departmental involvement. In Australia, colleague evaluation is accepted for research and scholarly outputs. Applications for study leave, for research grants, for promotion, submission of a journal article for publication, all require that colleagues act as referees. Faculty also ask students to evaluate their teaching by means of self-developed or, increasingly, standardised questionnaires. The latter, of course, may be used as evidence of ones teaching performance in promotion applications. All of these evaluations are self-initiated by faculty. They decide when they want to be evaluated, when they are 'ready' for peer judgment or student feedback. The notion of academic freedom is widely interpreted as meaning that faculty may teach what and how they like, and that they may research in any area they are interested in (and can get funds for) regardless of the practical use of that research, the political opportuneness or the departmental research program. Traditionally there has been little interference by the head of department or by the university administration. The tenure system in Australian universities was seen as ensuring that no external pressure could be placed on faculty.

Faculty and administrators where shaken out of their complacency when in 1982 the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts released a report, Tenure of Academics in which they proposed that periodic reviews of an academic's performance be instituted and annual consultations be conducted between head of department/dean and all faculty members. Due to a change of government at federal level the report has not yet been discussed in federal parliament. However, the very suggestion that such reviews might be introduced and tenure provisions be eroded has had an impact on institutions. Committees were set up to discuss the recommendations and implications; academic staff associations (unions of employees) rejected the recommendations while the public (in so far as one can gather from articles in and letters to newspapers) generally seemed to favour some system of faculty accountability.

In our own university a system of annual appraisal had been introduced at about the same time for probationary staff to monitor and help with their performance during the five years of their probationary appointment. We developed a system of teaching evaluation which could provide information on teaching for the annual appraisal, for the tenure decision, and also give faculty adequate feedback during this period so that they might improve their performance. In meetings of the academic staff association legitimate anxieties and paranoia about evaluation was expressed.

In order to ascertain the attitude to evaluation and to regular reviews in particular I conducted interviews with over a hundred faculty members in late 1983. I was particularly interested in faculty's concerns, fears, reservations and also in constructive suggestions they might make to ensure that reviews would be forward looking and constructive and not backward looking and punitive.

The following question was asked, inter alia:

> "Last year the Australian Senate published a report on tenure of academic staff (the Teague Report). In it they recommended that all staff should be regularly reviewed in all aspects of their performance (i.e. teaching, research and service).
>
> Do you agree with this/approve of regular reviews?"

The responses will be discussed in the paper under the headings:

1. Reasons for approval of reviews
2. Considerations for regular reviews
   a. Why evaluate - purpose of reviews
   b. Who should evaluate
   c. What should be evaluated
   d. Who should be evaluated
   e. When should the reviews take place
   f. How should the review be carried out
   g. What then - results and consequences.

A further question asked:

> "What effects, do you think, would regular compulsory evaluations of individual performance have on individuals and departments?"

Perceived positive and negative effects are discussed.

From the interviews it can be concluded that this group of faculty - which ranged in age from 21 to 63, in status from teaching assistant to full professor, and in length of teaching experience from 1 year to 30 years - is so diverse that no set of conditions will make any type of review acceptable to all. But there are some conditions which favour the chance that faculty will accept regular reviews. They are discussed under the headings of purpose, context, reviewers, subject, process, results and consequences of reviews.

REGULAR REVIEWS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. Staff Views.

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Regular reviews of individual performance were an emotive issue only two years ago. Following the release of the Teague Report (1982), *Tenure of Academics*[1], conference speeches, public statements, letters to the editor, academic staff association meetings and FAUSA pronouncements addressed themselves to this issue: reviews - yes or no? Most connected in their reactions the issue of regular reviews with the issue of absolute tenure, seeing regular reviews as collecting evidence to revoke tenure of staff. Yet the question of the extent of tenure and reviews are not necessarily linked.

Pressures for more public accountability are relatively new in Australian universities, although there has always been some form of internal accountability. At the University of Queensland as in other universities there exists a system of established peer review procedures, at the point of selection for a position, when applying for promotion, a special studies program or study leave, or for research grants, and when submitting articles or other writings for publication. Some of these evaluations cover the whole range of academic functions, others only research. All of these evaluations are self-initiated. This enables academics to set the pace and the frequency for reviews themselves - those in a hurry to establish or advance their academic careers or to participate in the international community of scholars frequently and regularly subject themselves to some form of peer review. Others, once they reach a 'comfortable' position seek little or no feedback from peers by not engaging in any competitive activities, whether by applications for promotion or research grants or anything else. Internal accountability is not a demand which the irstitution makes; it is only implicit in the review procedures.

At the University of Queensland a system of annual appraisals for probationary staff was approved in 1981 and formalised in 1983. For the first time a group of staff were subjected to regular evaluation by the head of department. These annual appraisals though conceived to ensure that only the best get tenure after five years, have, however, also a large developmental component. In the annual appraisals the focus is on achievements and achievable objectives and how assistance might be provided.

The debate in this University about the proposed regular reviews of tenured staff was in 1982, I presume, as emotive as anywhere else. The Staff Association

was alarmed and urgently called meetings; yet the mass of academics seemed unconcerned and did not seem to regard the recommendations of the Teague Report as a threat to their personal autonomy, to academic freedom or to their tenured position. The debate about reviews quietened down and moved to institutional committees; where suprainstitutional organisations are formulating their standpoint, the discussion has not become public. At this University the Academic Board set up an *ad hoc* committee on staff development and evaluation to examine and make recommendations mainly on the Teague Report and the 1981 AVCC Working Party Report *Academic Staff Development*[2]. The *ad hoc* committee's draft report rejected the notion of regular reviews; however, the Student Union subsequently presented a response to the draft report which supports the Teague Report's opinion, i.e.

> *What is required is a more explicit and regular review which is effective, and is seen to be effective, in ensuring a tenured academic is accountable for maintaining high standards of teaching, research and scholarship.*[3]

The union report is critical of many aspects of the committee's report and believes that *"The Committee's report accepts not only mediocrity but also inadequate performance"*[4].

With a debate in a board committee on the desirability of regular reviews and the possibility, though remote, that regular reviews might happen either by government edict or by internal adoption of the principle and practice, it seemed necessary to me that staff be asked about their reactions to it. Although staff association and union representatives were members of the committee both would be representing the opinions of their more articulate and involved respective clientele. Yet if reviews were introduced everyone, including the silent majority, would be affected.

In late 1983 I interviewed over a hundred staff in this University on their attitudes to evaluation, staff development, promotion and other aspects of their work. The majority of staff interviewed had had contact with the Tertiary Education Institute in the preceding nine months, either through participation in a seminar or workshop or by having their teaching evaluated. In addition, other staff from two departments were interviewed so that complete data on two departments became available. There does not seem to be any difference in attitudes between staff who were our 'clients' in the preceding nine months and those who were not. Consequently the group is treated as one. Of the 104 staff interviewed, 43 were 35 years or younger, and 12 were over 51. About half of the staff interviewed were lecturers, a quarter senior lecturers, and 15 were professor or associate professors. Staff from 43 of the 64 departments participated.

I do not claim that the responses are representative of the staff of this University. But I assume that their reactions to regular reviews do reflect the range of hopes and fears staff in any institution might have. Their responses are therefore reported below.

There was a clear indication that the majority of staff interviewed favoured regular reviews. In the following much is made of factors which might change a potentially constructive exercise into a destructive one. Negative or cautious comments should be read in the context of that generally favourable attitude. The set of conditions in section IV would, in the light of staff responses, facilitate staff acceptance of reviews and reflects principles of evaluation espoused also in the literature[5].

I REASONS FOR APPROVAL OF REVIEWS

In the structured interviews I asked the following question after having discussed reactions to teaching, research, staff development and evaluation of teaching:

> *Last year the Australian Senate published a report on tenure of academic staff (the Teague Report). In it they recommended that all staff should be regularly reviewed in all aspects of their performance (i.e. teaching, research and service).*
>
> *Do you agree with this/approve of regular reviews?*

Most staff supported the notion of regular reviews; but most staff also expressed qualifications.

Reasons given by respondents for their approval of regular reviews fall into two main categories:

1. Reviews provide a means of identifying and telling people who are not performing adequately, and possibly of 'getting rid of deadwood'. They prevent slackness due to staff inertia, especially after tenure.
2. Staff must be accountable for their professional actions just as professionals elsewhere are.

Reasons categorised under 1. often spring directly from staff's own experience with colleagues, often senior colleagues, in the department and express the exasperation felt by many about the University's inability to deal with inadequate staff performance. Many staff quite clearly regard reviews as a means of not only identifying non-performers but of invoking 'punishment'. It might well be that the ability of departments to carry non-performers has decreased with decreased staffing.

Other staff, again mainly those who have worked in their profession before joining the University are used to being held accountable and acknowledge the community's right to open accountability. While a few of the opponents of reviews refer to 'academic freedom' which they see endangered in reviews, some of the supporters of reviews explicitly belittle the notion of 'academic freedom' if it is used as an excuse for not committing oneself fully to one's task.

Examples are:

> *In the Public Service, where I worked, there is more pressure on people to perform. I don't consider arguments against reviews as valid. It is only a protection of incompetence. The same principles as elsewhere should apply in the University.*
>
> *University staff are, after all, professionals, with a captive audience, and because of that University staff should be evaluated. A doctor who is not found satisfactory by his patients will lose them. One could get accustomed to it and accept that as an academic one gets evaluated. It could be institutionalised. It would be like going to the dentist. If you don't go, your teeth will suffer.*

II POSITIVE EFFECTS OF REVIEWS

A further question asked:

> *What effects, do you think, would regular compulsory evaluations of individual performance have on individuals and departments?*

If no positive or negative effects were mentioned I prompted by saying:

> *Can you think of any negative/positive effects?*

Only a handful could not think of any positive effects spontaneously. By far most comments related to the effect of reviews on individuals, or some specific categories - like older staff; so-called deadwood; staff without commitment to teaching; or staff overall. Through the effects on individuals, departmental changes would be obtained, with the positive effect spreading from individuals to department and the whole university.

Below is a categorisation of the responses.

		No. of mentions
1.	**Effects on individuals**	
1.1	Generally improved performance, raising of standards or maintaining high standards	38
1.2	Would smarten up some people, would make people pull up their socks, would keep people on their toes	20
1.3	Deadwood would be cut out, weeded out	17

		No. of mentions
1.4	Would give feedback to individuals on themselves and show where to improve	17
1.5	More conscious effort into teaching, more care about teaching; lift the level of commitment to scholarship and teaching	14
1.6	Clearer idea of and realisation of one's own ambitions and goals; increase motivation and morale of staff	4
2.	Effects on departments	
2.1	Reflection on and improvement in teaching and research; definition of departmental goals	7
2.2	Enables identification of people who need change of direction; overview of people's teaching and research skills and workload	2
2.3	Enliven the department, HoD to take interest in research	3
2.4	Excellence and qualities of academic life can be measured	3
Other, e.g.:		
	Increased community standing; appreciation by students	2
3.	Effects on the University	
3.1	Strengthen the University's position *vis-à-vis* the community by showing it is accountable	2
3.2	Improve overall productivity	1

The extent of the spontaneous exclamation that regular reviews would improve the overall performance or raise standards was remarkable. It indicates a strong positive attitude to evaluation based on the realisation that most people can perform better than they are presently doing, that many people are in danger of losing self-motivation and getting into a rut.

While the Teague Committee envisaged that persistently unproductive staff might be forced to resign, institutions and staff associations have not accepted that reviews are needed to revoke tenure for a few staff. In the interviews some strong words were spoken about 'deadwood' in departments and the hope expressed that reviews would do something about them. They were mostly seen as tenured staff, at higher levels, in some departments readers and professors, in others at senior lecturer level. It was taken for granted by many staff that departments have a small minority of people who abuse the freedom which academic positions give. They were seen as people with no ambition left and instead of applying their energy to scholarship in teaching and/or research *"go into early retirement without letting the university know"*, i.e. they shift their energies to pursuits outside the university.

Another group of staff saw the pressure effect on staff as beneficial. They believe that without accountability slackness could set in. They see reviews as having the effect of *"keeping people on their toes"*, making them *"pull up their socks"*, making them *"come up to scratch"*, *"smarten people up"*. Sometimes these comments are directed towards other staff, but some respondents acknowledged that all staff, including themselves, might need the pressure.

These descriptive terms refer more to the punitive or disciplinarian outcomes of regular reviews. But many staff also saw as a positive outcome the feedback one would receive on one's strengths and weaknesses. Reviews were seen as making people more aware of areas of effectiveness and ineffectiveness, as a first step towards self-improvement.

Reviews were also seen by some as giving the department unity and purpose. Examples for this are:

> *[Positive effects would be] reflection and improvement. The Department would pay more attention to teaching how, why and what, and it would look at direction and thrust of research.*

> *People would be much more accountable and far less laissez-faire. The Department would have more clearly defined goals, and would have to demonstrate that it achieves them. It would also demonstrate that they meet the needs of the students they are teaching and it would also possibly have to prove they are publishing. The Department's bias towards certain areas or theories would be demonstrated.*

III NEGATIVE EFFECTS

The vast majority of staff interviewed could cite possible positive effects of reviews spontaneously. But about 20 staff did not think of any negative effects and another 27 only after prompting.

The negative effects were usually put into the context of *"this might happen"*, or *"some people will be ..."*, or as an outcome which though undesirable was still preferable to no review at all.

The following quote is an illustration of the complexity of the *"yes, but"* answer:

> *I am not against regular reviews, but against some of the uses which could be made of the results. People under threat of constant review could concentrate their efforts on appearances. This could lead to grade inflation. At times I felt this is already happening to keep*

students in courses. For instance, in departments or subjects where there are too many students there is hard grading to keep students out, and it works.

The purposes and the perceived potential use of reviews could be destructive. There is enough pressure on people already.

And a mainly negative reply:

I am basically against reviews. It takes time away from the Head of Department if he has to do it. It leads to even more bureaucratisation and to a greater administrative waterhead. Certainly it would lead to discontent among staff.

Once staff have been selected they should be allowed to go ahead with their work. They have feedback from students and they get feedback from referees for journals or whenever they publish. Every system has people who misuse it, but this is no reason for changing the system.

The effect on the individual depends on who does the review. On the positive side it would mean that individuals might make greater efforts, but on the other hand people would pretend in compulsory evaluations without really changing.

The effect on the department would be splitting, with jealousy and disruption of academic life. I don't think any interference by the administration is desired. I feel basically that only students should review.

These quotes combine a number of arguments, for and against reviews in addition to some of the provisos discussed later.

The negative effects mentioned by respondents can be grouped into the following categories:

Negative effects of reviews:	No. of mentions
1. On individuals - anxiety, insecurity, feeling of persecution and pressure, defensiveness	39
2. On innovations in research and teaching - pressure for conformity	13
3. On relationships within departments - mistrust, competition	12
4. Opposition and sabotage by staff	12
5. On type of research done, focus of activity	8
6. Increased bureaucratisation and centralised control	7
Other	2

Respondents felt that reviews could be a very threatening experience for some staff, some would get nervous breakdowns, particularly those seeking tenure. Others who felt that their independence was being encroached on would be dissatisfied and full of mistrust. Generally, there might be a lot of animosity,

and competitiveness among staff would grow. Instead of increasing productivity this might decrease the quality of teaching and possibly the quality of research.

A number of people saw reviews as potential threats to free and serious commitment to teaching and research. Comments included:

> *People will be very defensive. Innovations might be crammed. People might be scared of trying anything new if one doesn't know the outcome.*

> *It might be like with research grants - one aims for productive results in the short term. Some could have the tendency to do the easy things. Conventionality may be promoted.*

> *If the University were too performance-oriented and not worried about its long-term goals, then this would be negative, because flashy performance might just appear good.*

> *If the University looks for research, people will neglect teaching in favour of research. If one aspect is emphasised it would be detrimental to the other. Evaluations might make unreal demands on people and the quality of research might deteriorate.*

Other areas where negative effects were perceived by some were in the organisation of the University. Here bureaucratisation and more centralised control were the main targets.

Some were very sceptical that a review would result in any change; the effect of this would be negative:

> *People who are concerned about their work won't benefit. It will make them anxious. It won't have any effect on those who try to get away with the minimum. Quite often they have a support system which shelters them from any disciplinary action.*

The perceived potential negative effects of reviews have to be taken seriously by anyone attempting to introduce compulsory evaluation, whether it be evaluation of teaching, or evaluation of individual performance either in the context of general performance reviews or within the context of departmental reviews. Therefore they have been give some prominence here.

It is clear that the majority of respondents favour regular reviews, yet they are very aware of the potential damage they can do - to individual staff, to relationships within departments, and to the main missions of the university: research and teaching.

Staff themselves in answering the question of whether they were for regular reviews and what effects they thought reviews might have, expressed many conditions under which a system of regular reviews might work, conditions which would prevent negative effects occurring, or would at least minimise them.

IV CONDITIONS WHICH FAVOUR THE ACCEPTANCE OF REVIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

From the interviews it can be concluded that this group of staff members - which ranged in age from 21 to 63, in status from teaching assistant to professor, in length of teaching experience from 1 year to 30 years, and in experience of tertiary education institutions from sole experience with the University of Queensland to experience at various universities and colleges in a number of different countries - is so diverse that no set of conditions will make any type of review acceptable to all.

A number of questions must be answered satisfactorily and a set of conditions be fulfilled if staff cooperation with and openness to the reviews are sought. Each question will be answered by relating points staff made to these issues and then I will comment on them.

(1) Why conduct a review?

The purpose of the review needs to be clear without hidden agenda. The following points were made in the interviews: The motives of the administration should be perceived as justified. This means that political and ideological considerations do not enter into the review but that it is done for educational reasons. Thus promotion of conformity should not be one of the purposes, and experimentation and initiatives should still be encouraged. Reviews should not be stop-watch exercises to increase the efficiency of staff from a management point of view but be an exercise in helping staff. Their purpose should be positive and constructive. People ought to benefit from reviews, ought to be encouraged to evaluate themselves and to take action on the results. Evaluations should provide the feedback for self-improvement, indeed they should focus on development. Reviews should not be a "*guillotine*" situation, i.e. they should not break or make academic careers.

Or, as someone else expressed it, reviews should not be witch-hunts. On the other hand, while respondents affirmed that reviews should be constructive, this was sometimes interpreted to mean that reviews should discriminate between

those who perform adequately and those who do not; and that these results should be brought to the attention of those concerned. And in order to bring about change, reviews must have "*teeth*". If no changes could be made, if no changes were enforced, reviews would be dysfunctional, a waste of time and money. While many do not want the tenure system to be undermined or jobs threatened, they still want the reviews to have as one of their purposes "*cutting out the deadwood*".

It is clear from the above that staff associate different purposes with reviews. Therefore, whatever the purpose of the reviews may be, it must be clearly specified. Whether staff approved reviews for feedback or reviews for decision on tenure, implicitly there was consensus that the purpose of reviews should not just be a confirmation of the *status quo*, a pat on the back, but direction to change. Reviews carry the implication that one can do something about and with the results of reviews.

Staff will accept reviews more easily if the emphasis is on the improvement aspect. Although they are resistant to outside political pressures, many accept the notion that the institution and the community have a right to insist on performance standards. Therefore it is important to 'sell' the purpose to staff, to explain clearly the rationale and actions which can be taken on the outcome of reviews. Positive change is not likely to be generated if staff are suspicious of the administration's motives; if they feel insecure, are paranoid and anxious.

If the main motive is to bring about change within the existing staffing requirements, then there is no need for paranoia and feelings of insecurity. In the unlikely event of tenure being 'weakened' and staff being liable to dismissal, the criteria and procedures for such action would need to be explained before the review begins; and staff should be assured that dismissal will not result from reviews but only from individual staff's failure to act on the advice of review committees. The openness about the avowed purpose of the reviews must be reflected in the way the review is conducted and the results are presented and followed up.

In summary, in answering the question,"*Why should regular reviews be conducted?*", the following points need to be considered:

1.1 The purpose must be specific, unambiguous and open, with no 'hidden agenda'.

1.2 The purpose should be educational, not political.

1.3 The purpose must be to bring about change in individuals.

1.4 The purpose must have a credible and openly stated relationship with the process of the review, the outcome and implementation.

1.5 The purpose should be explained to staff, perhaps in the context of professional accountability.

(2) Who should evaluate?

Academic staff are used to reviews by peers; promotion rounds, journal refereeing procedures and scrutiny of research grant applications are all based on the practice of peer reviews. The Teague Report[6] suggested that a review committee might consist of three persons, one from within the department nominated by the faculty dean or head of school, a second from the same institution but not the same faculty, and a third who is not employed in any higher education institution but is an expert in evaluation of professional work. Staff in the interviews were not asked their reaction to this suggestion, but a number of them volunteered their ideas on who should evaluate.

There was no consensus as to whether evaluators should be external or internal to the department and the University. There were only voices against government appointed and imposed evaluators.

Evaluators external to the department were seen as undesirable by some, particularly if no proper input was given from within the department. It was mentioned that a lot of window dressing is possible in reviews (a look at the staffing sheet suffices) and external people might not be able to 'read' this. Others considered external reviewers useful, because they could be impartial, free from political and factional pressure and bring their knowledge of other departments to bear on the appraisal. One suggestion was to appoint a panel of experienced researchers and administrators from another institution who come into the department, look at teaching and research and give an appraisal of the department and its staff relative to other departments in the discipline across the country. This, of course, would apply more to evaluation of individual performance within the context of departmental reviews.

Some rejected evaluation by peers and the Head of Department because of personality factors which might impinge on objective judgment, the danger of litigation, and the *"big brother is watching you"* syndrome. They favoured someone or somebody neutral, like the academic development unit.

Others saw reviewing as a job of the Head of Department and were satisfied that the Head would know first what went wrong and could act informally; or they saw the department as the only appropriate body because people in it know what's going on.

Some mentioned that self-appraisal is a necessary step, perhaps even the only appropriate step in a review; a very few felt that only students could judge their performance.

From the staff opinions gathered, it seems that there might never be consensus as to who are appropriate persons to review one's performance. Flexibility and a serious attempt to take account of staff's idiosyncratic opinions about the suitability of evaluators might result in a less manageable review system but might give positive change a greater chance. Results will only be acceptable insofar as the reviewers have credibility. For disciplinary reviews this might not be important, but for reviews which have as main aim professional development, it is crucial. Staff can be asked to improve, can be shown the way to improve, can be asked to increase their research involvement and output, but the quality of the outcomes depends on the staff member's commitment to improvement. Otherwise short-cuts will be taken, a lot of pretending will take place, and the quality of research and teaching will decline while cynicism and disillusionment will increase.

In order, then, for reviews to have an optimal chance of acceptance, this is important:

2.1 Reviewers must be free from political and partisan pressures.

2.2 Reviewers must have credibility for this task in the eyes of those evaluated.

(3) What should be evaluated?

A review of individual performance includes by its definition all aspects of a staff member's role: teaching, research and publishing, and service to the department, the institution, the community and the profession and/or discipline.

A number of staff explicitly mentioned that teaching and research should be given equal weight, based on the experience that research tends to be given greater weight in promotion decisions and on the fear that this preference for research might filter through in reviews. A balance of different roles should be acknowledged. Others made the suggestion that staff may state where the emphasis

of their work lies, and that they be evaluated with this in mind. If one isn't good in one area, one should be able to compensate through strengths in another.

Some acknowledge that it might not be the individual who chooses the foci in their work but the institution. The University or the department might specify a set of expectations of all or of each staff member and then staff are measured against them, are measured in how far they fulfil the expectations. This, of course, is already happening within the probationary period.

This then raises the question in how far the institution can insist that staff give preference to certain aspects of their work, e.g. research. The notion of academic freedom relates not only to what and how staff research but also what and how they teach and how they distribute their time between these tasks. While most staff acknowledge that they have to perform teaching duties, placing emphasis of their commitment to one or the other area is regarded as part of their professional autonomy.

Thus in considering what is being reviewed, the following applies:

3.1 Staff should be allowed to specify which aspects of their academic work they have emphasised.

3.2 All academic tasks should be taken into account.

3.3 Work over a number of years needs to be reviewed; any one year might not present a fair picture of a staff member's contribution.

(4) How is the review being carried out?

Unlike the Teague Committee, respondents thought that all staff should be reviewed, from the pro-vice-chancellors down, if regular reviews were introduced. If only sub-groups of staff are reviewed, members of these sub-groups might feel *"persecuted"*, *"picked on"* and this might lead to a lowering of morale. It was suggested that extension of reviews to include all staff, a department at a time or within a departmental review, would minimise anxiety and help to accustom staff to reviews as a 'normal' occurrence. Indeed personal evaluation could be embedded in a departmental review, and departmental reviews in an institutional review.

Regular reviews meant for most respondents an interval of five to seven years, which is also suggested in the Teague Report. One staff member thought that every department should go back to a zero based budget situation every five years and have to justify its existence.

A few respondents mentioned that formal reviews would involve a competitive element not appropriate in a University department as lecturers should be competing with people all over the world. Reviews should therefore be non-competitive and measure staff not against each other but against researchers in the discipline at large. Criteria would need to be established for each discipline applicable to all those departments in the country.

The interviews indicated that some staff members don't see themselves in a hierarchical group but in a group of peers who are loosely connected by departmental affiliation and have strong ties outside the department to others in the same discipline. This varies between departments, with professional ones being more cohesive and accepting responsibility towards the profession and for the employability of students.

Some respondents mentioned that any review must be interactive so that staff can give input and react to the results. Indeed, staff are used to being able to consult with others and to being consulted. Therefore they must be made to feel that they have some control of the review process. Individuals can make an important contribution from their subjective standpoint, but also from their intimate knowledge of the working of their department and of their own work within that context. As one respondent put it: *"Reviews need to be done across the board and with everything open so that people evaluated have access to information and significant input."*

The review process must be seen as fair to all staff, avoiding unnecessary anxiety and being handled tactfully and discreetly. *"Fair"* was the adjective most often used to describe how the review should be carried out. This relates to the process, the results of the review and the consequences. *"Fair"* was perceived in such a way that the University makes allowances for the diversity in personality and expertise. As one respondent puts it: *"The University is a place for disciplined eccentricity."* Conformity is generally abhorred.
The review also needs to be carried out in a humane way. Several addressed the question of older staff who might be unwilling or unable to change. There was sympathy for staff who have contributed in the past and are now burnt-out or fatigued. Do 25 years of good service outweigh five years of poor service? Many would feel that they do. It is recognised that people's interests and abilities also change when they get older. It is clear then that during the whole process the emphasis would need to be on the positive, constructive, humane aspects of reviews. If reviews have disciplinary intent this will be nearly impossible to achieve; if there is a disciplinary possiblity, the importance of the credibility of the evaluators and of oppenness about the results of the review are self-evident.

Lastly, staff felt that regular reviews should also be tailored to the facilities and resources availabe and be neither too costly nor too time-consuming.

In summary, reviews should be conducted in the following way:

4.1 Reviews must be open and interactive with each staff member giving significant input into his/her own evaluation and being able to comment on the results.

4.2 Reviews must be perceived as fair. They should not 'pick' on staff, but they should discriminate between staff without it being a witch-hunt.

4.3 Reviews should be humane. They should make allowances for older, burnt-out staff, and staff who lost their drive or were overtaken by developments.

4.4 Reviews should be constructive. They should be forward looking, pointing to areas and means of improvement.

4.5 Reviews should be broadening, not narrowing down acceptable behaviour. They should allow for *"disciplined eccentricity"*.

4.6 Reviews should result in increased morale.

(5) What then?

Staff approve of reviews because they feel accountable as professionals, because they feel everyone needs to be told once in a while how they are going, or because they want action to be taken against the persistent under or non-performers. If no action can be taken or is taken as a result of reviews when staff see a need for action, reviews will be discredited and regarded as a waste of time in addition to an intrusive action.

One could say that results must therefore be phrased in such a way that the individual staff member can take action on recommendations and within a context of available assistance; and that the Head of Department can take action against the notorious non-performers; by setting targets, enforcing retraining; and after expiration of a time-period for improvement, dismissal.

On the other hand the vast majority of staff only need some impetus, some redirection, possibly some fresh ideas. And many need nothing at all. For all of these people, too, reviews must result in something, so as not to be seen as a waste of time: achievements are recognised, or new avenues for action discussed, or areas for further development worked out.

The way the results are formulated, the consequences which negative and positive reviews have in either redirection, eventual dismissal, or on the other hand, rewards such as increments and citations, are crucial for staff attitudes towards future reviews and their attitudes towards the administration and self-development.

Reviews should lead to change. One respondent stated his position succinctly. He would approve of regular reviews *"if real change can be processed by the person who is subject to the evaluation, so that she or he doesn't lose face or faith."* This points to the need for staff development opportunities. Staff felt that they needed a support system to help them process the change, to improve their overall performance. Staff development as a necessary outcome of review is seen as desirable, too, because there is no clear path for personal and career development in the University. One respondent, coming later in life into the University, felt that being a lecturer is a very isolated existence in contrast to industry, where there is a social system with responsibilities to people above and for people below, and to people who are peers.

Not losing face implies that the consequences of the review are not punitive but forward looking and constructive, that people don't feel *"picked on"*, singled out or humiliated.

Not losing faith implies that no *"vetting out of the undesirable"* is done, of the non-conformist, the 'trouble-makers', the eccentrics, in short, that reviews are not used as a vehicle for ensuring conformity.

In summary, a review should end with the following results and consequences:

5.1 Results of a review must be formulated in such a way that action can follow.

5.2 Reviews must take into account in their recommendations the existing facilities available for staff development.

5.3 Results should destroy mistrust, anxiety and paranoia generated by the very fact of reviews.

5.4 Results should not infringe on the essence of academic freedom. They should not result in a *de facto* prescription of research areas or methods, or teaching approaches.

5.5 Reviews must lead to action against 'deadwood' by the provision of sunset clauses, without creating anxiety among the performing staff.

5.6 Reviews must lead to self-improvement through professional development.

5.7 Reviews should not result in more centralised bureaucratic control of staff.

5.8 Reviews should not result in a time and resource costly review machinery being established.

CONCLUSIONS

I share the same hopes and fears of what regular reviews might lead to as other academic staff. If reviews can be conducted in the way as outlined in the points above I am willing to support them. Incidentally, the Teague Report made many of the same points as the interviewed staff did:

> *This formal review process should be clear and uncomplicated and its results open and properly accountable. ...*
>
> *The reviews should ... be a positive contribution towards confirming shared goals within any teaching course or joint research program and enable feedback information and assessment of real benefit to an individual academic. ...*
>
> *The review process should not ... require a disproportionate amount of staff time to carry them out."* [7]

In the introduction to this paper I have said that tenure and regular reviews are not necessarily linked. However, many staff implicitly or explicitly referred to that link. My personal standpoint is that the purpose and emphasis of regular reviews should be on professional development.

Regular reviews could give the University a chance to demonstrate that institutional expectations of staff and individual career expectations can harmonise, that the University in fact is interested in the development of its staff. They could also demonstrate that the University respects staff autonomy and encourages, not stifles, experimentation and innovation; that academic freedom is not being steamrolled by a bureaucratic machinery but can flourish within the context of professional accountability.

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